For 5 years during elementary and middle school, my family was the only Black family in town let alone my school or singular classroom. I was lucky enough to have incredible parents who were able to supplement my Eurocentric education with trips around the country, Sundays spent in bookstores and mini history lessons at the dinner table. But why should parents have to supplement education? Why was my history placed in the margins and footnotes of textbooks or worse sectioned off to the month of February and represented solely by Black men.

When I entered the Tufts Educational Studies Program I was immediately surrounded by students of color. I was no longer expected to be a representative of my race. I was an individual whose thoughts and opinions grew from my own experience. When I first read Kimberlé Crenshaw’s “Mapping the Margins” in the course Critical Race Theory and began to understand the term Intersectionality—the idea that our many facets of identity intersect and should be understood as such—it allowed me to piece together various parts of myself.

The diverse group of students in this program allowed for other forms of identity and experience to flourish so that categories of gender, class and sexuality also emerged as more complex. Our histories, our narratives, our experiences were represented in the literature we read, and in the theories we studied. They were encouraged in the conversations we had and the research we undertook. Our various interests made conversations richer, debates more heated and TV watching a bit more complicated.

We have learned that knowledge is not a scarcity. There are numerous forms of knowledge, and yet educational systems often privilege one. For instance, in her master’s thesis, Gabrielle Hernández wrote about militancy, political prisoners, and the tension between forms of knowledge, while Jenna Ross explored the production of heterosexual knowledge forms through athletics and its imaging. Specifically, she considered the implications for female athletes in schools. Roxana Woudstra researched *The Chronicle of Education* and analyzed the ways in which dominant cultural capital impacts the admission and retention of students of color in graduate education, and Brittany Lewis researched young Black men’s refusal of dominant cultural capital in lieu of Black cultural capital and these young men’s subsequent punishment in urban public schools. And I undertook an ethnographic exploration of men’s collegiate rowing, exploring the subjectivity of female coxswains and gendered power dynamics using feminist standpoint theory.

Today we will graduate from an oasis, a refuge from a surrounding white, middle class, heterosexist and heteronormative world. Throughout the past two or more years, we have been challenged to see the realities of today and our roles within those realities. In the face of learning about oppression, we can be reminded of Critical Race Theory grandfather Derrick Bell’s charge that the greater good is to engage in a struggle, even if that struggle is indefinite or permanent. That it is the struggle itself that brings value to the world.

As my Educational Studies peers and I go on to be Ph.D. candidates, higher education administrators, university athletic coaches, policy analysts, and critical theorists, we are charged with inspiring and fostering hope for the future of education.

We must take our knowledge and the knowledge of others forward and apply it to the work we plan to do hereafter. We must continue to work tirelessly, to put an end to inequity so that every person receives the education, the support and the opportunities they wholeheartedly deserve.
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